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ASMUSSEN POISED TO CLOSE CHURCHILL DOWNS SPRING MEET WITH A BANG

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, June 26, 2020) – Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen** is poised to close the 2020 Churchill Downs Spring Meet on a charge with 15 horses entered in the final three days of racing including 2019 Champion Older Dirt Female **Midnight Bisou** (3-5 on the morning line) in the \$200,000 Fleur de Lis presented by Coca-Cola (GII) and promising juvenile **Cazadero** (8-5) in the \$100,000 Bashford Manor presented by TwinSpires.com (GIII).

“We’re very grateful to be able to run horses of this quality during this ‘new normal,’” Asmussen said. “Even though the schedule of racing has been altered, we remain grateful to have horses like (Midnight Bisou) to be able to run in stakes races such as the Fleur de Lis.”

Saturday’s 11-race program is highlighted by the \$500,000 Stephen Foster presented by Coca-Cola (GII) but many racing fans will be focused on the Fleur de Lis with a star-studded matchup between Midnight Bisou and last year’s Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) winner **Serengeti Empress**.

“This has been an unprecedented year in more ways than one,” Asmussen said. “The (national) stakes schedule has not been as traditional as it used to be. We gave (Midnight Bisou) ample time to get over the trip and effort she put in at the world’s richest horse race (the \$20 million Saudi Cup) in February. She was quarantined in Chicago and eventually moved to Keeneland thereafter. Her time off lasted longer than expected, which wasn’t ideal at the time but is now.”

Midnight Bisou (20-12-5-3—\$7,250,000) has been nothing short of spectacular throughout her 20-race career. The now 5-year-old mare began her career on the 2018 Road to the Kentucky Oaks with victories in the \$200,000 Santa Ynez (GII), \$100,000 Santa Ysabel (GIII) and \$400,000 Santa Anita Oaks (GI) with previous trainer **Bill Spawr**. Midnight Bisou finished third behind **Monomoy Girl** in the 2018 Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI).

“She’s always been a beautifully kind filly to train,” Asmussen said. “She’s become more confident in her training over the last two years.”

Saturday’s Fleur de Lis is a Breeders’ Cup “Win and You’re In Distaff Division” series race. The winner will get an automatic berth to the season-ending championship race on Nov. 7 at Keeneland.

“Her next two races will likely determine which (Breeders’ Cup) race we could point toward,” Asmussen said. “We have constantly discussed where we are at with her training and progression but we know how well she performed against some of the world’s best racehorses in Saudi.”

The Fleur de Lis field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Go Google Yourself** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Paul McGee, 8-1); **Another Broad** (John Velazquez, Todd Pletcher, 12-1); **Chocolate Kisses** (Declan Carroll, Mark Casse, 12-1); **Serengeti Empress** (Joe Talamo, Tom Amoss, 2-1); Midnight Bisou (Mike Smith, Asmussen, 3-5); **Red Dane** (Corey Lanerie, Charlie LoPresti, 50-1); and **Motion Emotion** (Julien Leparoux, Richard Baltas, 15-1).

Another top contender for the Asmussen barn entered Saturday is **Stonestreet Stables’** debut winner **Cazadero** in the Bashford Manor. The precocious 2-year-old son of Street Sense won his debut by 8 ¾ lengths at odds of 5-1. Asmussen’s go-to rider **Ricardo Santana Jr.** will be in the irons for the six furlong Bashford Manor, which will go as Race 8 on Saturday.

The Bashford Manor field, which features all first-out maiden winners, from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Crown and Coke** (Miguel Mena, James Lawrence II, 30-1); **Hulen** (Corey Lanerie, Steve Asmussen, 5-1); **Gatsby** (Tyler Gaffalione, Juan Alvarado, 4-1); **Hyperfocus** (John Velazquez, Todd Pletcher, 4-1); **Herd Immunity** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Peter Miller, 9-2); **Cazadero** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Asmussen, 8-5); and **County Final** (James Graham, John Ennis, 6-1).

Entering the final three days of the meet, Asmussen remained one win behind **Dale Romans**, 742-to-741, for the all-time leading trainer mark at Churchill Downs. Asmussen surpassed Romans’ mark earlier in the meet but, in turn, Romans won five races in less than two weeks to retake his spot on top.

COX CONFIDENT OWENDALE CAN TAKE A STEP FORWARD IN SATURDAY'S STEPHEN FOSTER – Rupp Racing's multiple Grade III winner **Owendale** will attempt to take a step forward to become one of the top older horses in the country in Saturday's \$500,000 Stephen Foster presented by Coca-Cola (GII).

"He's only had one start this year (in the \$100,000 Blame) but his victory was visually very impressive for us," trainer **Brad Cox** said. "It's only one race but we're hoping he keeps showing that positive progression from a 3-year-old to an older 4-year-old. The Blame was a one-turn race, which is not his preferred distance and a distance he hasn't run at in several starts. The 1 1/8-mile distance in the Stephen Foster should definitely suit him better and we're confident he can take that next step forward to becoming one of the top handicap horses in the country."

Saturday's Stephen Foster is the marquee race of the 2020 Spring Meet at Churchill Downs with the winner receiving an automatic berth to the Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) on Nov. 7 at Keeneland. The Stephen Foster has had a strong influence on the Breeders' Cup Classic and Horse of the Year honors. Four horses used victories in the Stephen Foster as part of their résumés in Horse of the Year campaigns: **Black Tie Affair** (1991), **Saint Liam** (2005), **Curlin** (2008) and **Gun Runner** (2017). In addition, two runner-ups were crowned Horse of the Year: **Mineshaft** (2003) and **Wise Dan** (2012). Also, **Awesome Again** (1998) and **Blame** (2010) completed same-year Foster-Classical doubles. **Fort Larned** won the Classic in 2012, and won the Foster the following year prior to a fourth-place run in his bid for a second Classic win.

Owendale was made the 4-1 third choice on the morning line for Saturday's Stephen Foster and his regular pilot **Florent Geroux** will be in the irons. The Stephen Foster is carded as Race 10 of 11 with a post time of 5:47 p.m.

The complete field for the Stephen Foster (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Fearless** (John Velazquez, Todd Pletcher, 12-1); **Pirate's Punch** (Mike Smith, Grant Forster, 15-1); **Alkhaatam** (Declan Cannon, Danny Peitz, 30-1); **Multiplier** (Tyler Gaffalione, Peter Miller, 10-1); **Tom's d'Etat** (Miguel Mena, Al Stall Jr., even-money); **By My Standards** (Gabriel Saez, Calhoun, 5-2); **Silver Dust** (Beschizza, Calhoun, 10-1); and Owendale (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 4-1).

SATURDAY'S LATE PICK 5 POOL GUARANTEED AT \$250,000 – Saturday's 50-cent late Pick 5 pool at Churchill Downs will have a \$250,000 guarantee for Races 7-11 which include a quartet of stakes events anchored by the Grade II, \$500,000 Stephen Foster presented by Coca-Cola.

The Late Pick 5 will begin in Race 7 at 4:12 p.m. ET with a 5 1/2-furlong allowance event on the Matt Winn Turf Course. The competitive field of nine betting interests features a tepid 3-1 morning line choice in the six-time winner **Wellabled** for owner **Carolyn Wilson** and trainer **Larry Rivelli**.

Races 8-11 feature a quartet of stakes events with the \$100,000 Bashford Manor presented by TwinSpires.com (GIII), \$200,000 Fleur de Lis presented by Coca-Cola (GII), \$500,000 Stephen Foster presented by Coca-Cola (GII) and the \$100,000 Regret presented by TwinSpires.com (GIII), respectively.

The 15-percent takeout wager will close on the 13-horse Regret that, like the opening leg, features a mild 3-1 morning line favorite in recent allowance winner **Crystal Cliffs** (FR).

Free Brisnet past performances are available for Saturday's 11-race card at www.churchilldowns.com/handicapping.

BELMONT STAKES WINNER TIZ THE LAW MADE 7-2 FAVORITE IN POOL 5 OF KENTUCKY DERBY FUTURE WAGER – **Sackatoga Stable's** \$1 million Belmont Stakes (Grade I) winner **Tiz the Law** has been made the 7-2 morning line favorite in Pool 5 of the **Kentucky Derby Future Wager** ("KDFW") that will run Friday-Sunday.

With the postponement of the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) to Sept. 5 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Churchill Downs has announced three additional pools for the KDFW and an extra pool for the Kentucky Oaks Future Wager. In addition to this weekend's Future Wager, Pool 6 of the KDFW will span Friday, July 17 through Sunday, July 19 while Pool 7 will run Friday, Aug. 7 through Sunday, Aug. 9. Pool 2 of the Kentucky Oaks Future Wager will run concurrently with KDFW Pool 6.

Tiz the Law, the multiple Grade I-winning son of Constitution, reaffirmed his status as the early Kentucky Derby favorite with his victory in last Saturday's 1 1/8-mile Belmont Stakes, the kickoff leg to this year's rescheduled Triple Crown series. Trained by **Barclay Tagg**, Tiz the Law took strong attention in all four previous pools of the KDFW closing at odds of 11-1, 8-1, 7-1 and 5-1, respectively. Tiz the Law is expected to have one final prep prior to the Kentucky Derby in the \$1 million Travers (GI) on Aug. 8 at Saratoga.

Also likely to generate strong interest in Pool 5 of the KDFW is **C R K Stable's** \$400,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI) winner **Honor A. P.** (5-1). Trained by **John Shirreffs**, the lightly-raced Honor A. P. scored a mild 2 3/4-length upset over **Authentic** in last month's Santa Anita Derby. The top three finishers from that race are individual interests in Pool 5 of the KDFW. **Authentic**, who finished second as the 1-2 favorite, is tabbed as the 8-1 third choice on the morning line while third-place finisher **Rushie** is 20-1.

Authentic is one of four entrants in Pool 5 of the KDFW for Hall of Fame trainer **Bob Baffert**. The others are **Mrs. John Magnier**, **Michael Tabor**, **Derrick Smith** and **St. Elias Stable's** \$3.65 million yearling purchase and recent 2 1/4-length debut winner **Cezanne** (30-1), **Albaugh Family Stable** and **Spendthrift Farm's** multiple Grade II winner **Thousand Words** (50-1) and **Mike Pegram**, **Karl Watson** and **Paul Weitman's** dazzling seven-length debut winner **Uncle Chuck** (20-1).

The popular "**All Other 3-Year-Old Males**" was made the overall co-second choice on the morning line at 5-1. Also added for this pool is the return of the "**All 3-Year-Old Fillies**" which was made 15-1 on the morning line in the event the connections of top females, such as streaking three-time stakes winner **Swiss Skydiver** or Acorn (GI) winner **Gamine**, opt to face open company.

Here's the complete field for Pool 5 of the KDFW (with trainer and morning line odds): #1 **Art Collector** (Tommy Drury Jr., 30-1); #2 **Authentic** (Bob Baffert, 8-1); #3 **Basin** (Steve Asmussen, 20-1); #4 **Café Pharoah** (Noriyuki Hori, 20-1); #5 **Cezanne** (Bob Baffert, 20-1); #6 **Creed** (Shug McGaughey, 50-1); #7 **Dr Post** (Todd Pletcher, 15-1); #8 **Enforceable** (Mark Casse, 50-1); #9 **Ete Indien** (Patrick Biancone, 30-1); #10 **Honor A. P.** (John Shirreffs, 5-1); #11 **King Guillermo** (Juan Avila, 20-1); #12 **Man in the Can** (Ron Moquett, 50-1); #13 **Max Player** (Linda Rice, 20-1); #14 **Money Moves** (Todd Pletcher, 30-1); #15 **Mr. Big News** (Bret Calhoun, 50-1); #16 **Mystic Guide** (Mike Stidham, 50-1); #17 **Ny Traffic** (Saffie Joseph Jr., 20-1); #18 **Pneumatic** (Steve Asmussen, 30-1); #19 **Rushie** (Michael McCarthy, 20-1); #20 **Thousand Words** (Bob Baffert, 50-1); #21 **Tiz the Law** (Barclay Tagg, 7-2); #22 **Uncle Chuck** (Bob Baffert, 20-1); #23 **All 3-Year-Old Fillies** (15-1); and #24 **All Other 3-Year-Old Males** (5-1).

TV SCHEDULE THIS WEEK – The racing action from Churchill Downs Racetrack throughout the 2020 Spring Meet will be broadcast on FOX Sports' "America's Day at the Races," which will air every race day on either FS1 or FS2. Along with the Fox Sports coverage, racing on Saturday from Churchill Downs will air from 5-6 p.m. on NBC.

Friday, June 26

1:00 – 6:00 p.m. (FS2)

1:00 – 6:00 p.m. (MSG+)

3:00 – 6:00 p.m. (FOX Sports Ohio)

Saturday, June 27

1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (FS2)

3:00 – 7:00 p.m. (FS1)

5:00 – 6:00 p.m. (NBC)

1:00 – 7:00 p.m. (MSG+)

Sunday, June 28

1:00 – 6:00 p.m. (FS2)

1:00 – 6:00 p.m. (MSG+)

3:00 – 6:00 p.m. (FOX Sports Ohio)

CROSS COUNTRY PICK 5 – On Saturday, Churchill Downs will partner with the New York Racing Association and Thistledown for an all-stakes cross-country Pick 5 wager.

The 50-cent bet, with a low 15 percent takeout, will be hosted by NYRA and feature the following races:

- Leg A: Thistledown, Race 8, \$500,000 Ohio Derby (GIII) (4:32 p.m.)
- Leg B: Belmont, Race 9, \$150,000 True North (GII) (5:36 p.m.)
- Leg C: Churchill, Race 10, \$500,000 Stephen Foster (GII) (5:47 p.m.)
- Leg D: Belmont, Race 10, \$250,000 Just a Game (GI) (6:08 p.m.)
- Leg E: Churchill, Race 11, \$100,000 Regret (GIII) (6:20 p.m.)

Wagering will be available on ADWs across the country including www.TwinSpires.com. Free Brisnet past performances are available for Churchill Downs races at www.churchilldowns.com/handicapping.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Friday's nine-race card at Churchill Downs had a first post of 1 p.m. The Single 6 Jackpot (Races 4-9) had an \$8,317 carryover. ... Jockey **Miguel Mena** was three wins away from 2,000-career victories. He had four horses entered on Friday at Churchill Downs. ... "**Inside Churchill Downs**" will air Friday at 6 p.m. on ESPN 680/105.7. The one-hour horse racing program will provide racing fans with insight and handicapping information for Saturday's Stephen Foster program plus guests **Kenny Rice** of NBC and trainer **Tom Amoss**. Those outside the Louisville area can listen live on www.espnloouisville.com. ... Sunday is closing day of the 2020 Spring Meet and will feature mandatory payouts in all exotic wagers.

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